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Soviet-Sponsored Societies of  
Friendship and Cultural Relations

1. The attached study provides a brief survey of the activities of the societies of friendship and cultural relations sponsored by—and in the interest of—the Soviet Union. An appendix lists the known societies sponsored by the Soviet Union and the other Communist countries.
2. It is the opinion of specialists who study Soviet propaganda activities most closely that in several countries during 1956 the friendship and cultural relations societies were the most effective instruments for disseminating information designed to generate friendlier attitudes toward the Soviet Union.
3. There is much evidence to show that the Soviets appreciate the work accomplished by these groups in several areas. The Soviets continue to finance heavily trips which foreign intellectuals make to the Soviet Union and which are ostensibly sponsored by these groups. In one area where the friendship society has been having considerable difficulty in meeting the expenses of its publication, the USSR (actually VOKS) has agreed to assume its entire cost. From another area there have been recent reports—as yet unconfirmed—that Soviet Embassy personnel are taking over progressively closer direction of the local friendship society and that this is resented by the local Party leadership. In the same area Party leaders are reported to suspect that certain persons in the local friendship society may be reporting information about the Party and some of its leaders to Soviet Embassy officers.

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